



News Release

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Service Announces a Draft Environmental Assessment on an Application for an Enhancement of Survival Permit for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will announce on Monday, June 25, 2012, in the *Federal Register*, a Notice of Availability (NOA) of a draft Environmental Assessment (dEA) on an application for an enhancement of survival permit under Section 10(a)(1)(A) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended for the lesser prairie-chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*). The application was submitted by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC). A 60-day public comment period will begin upon publication of the NOA in the *Federal Register*.

The permit application includes a draft Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) between ODWC and the Service for the lesser prairie-chicken in Oklahoma. The draft CCAA would be in effect for 25 years in Alfalfa, Beaver, Beckham, Cimarron, Custer, Dewey, Ellis, Harper, Major, Roger Mills, Texas, Washita, Woods and Woodward counties, Oklahoma.

The draft CCAA covers activities on non-federal lands in Oklahoma that are intended to conserve, restore and/or enhance habitat for the lesser prairie-chicken, improve the species population and reduce threats to the lesser prairie-chicken. In addition, the CCAA would provide landowners with assurances that no additional conservation measures beyond those agreed to in the CCAA would be required of them if the lesser prairie-chicken were to be listed in the future.

The Service is requesting comments or information from the public, other concerned government agencies, the scientific community, industry, or other interested parties concerning the dEA and draft CCAA. For more information on this proposal, what to comment on, or how to submit comments, see the *Federal Register* notice on our web site at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/LPC.html>. We will accept comments received or postmarked on or before August 24, 2012.

For additional information, contact Dixie Porter, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oklahoma Ecological Services Field Office, 9014 E. 21st Street, Tulsa, OK, 74129 and by telephone 918-581-7458 or by facsimile 512-490-0974. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800-877-8339.

The lesser prairie-chicken is a species of prairie grouse that currently occupies a five-state range that includes Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas and Colorado. The species needs large areas of relatively intact native grasslands and prairies to thrive. Threats to the lesser prairie-chicken include habitat loss, modification, degradation, and fragmentation.

In January 2011, the Service began development of a proposed listing rule for the lesser prairie-chicken. The proposed rule is scheduled to be published no later than September 2012. A determination of whether or not to list the lesser-prairie chicken will be based on a full assessment of the status of the species in light of the five Endangered Species Act listing factors.

The Service's priority is to make implementation of the ESA less complex, less contentious and more effective. We seek to accelerate recovery of threatened and endangered species across the nation, while making it easier for people to coexist with these species. To learn more about the Endangered Species Program, visit <http://www.fws.gov/angered/>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at

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